SONGS OF METAL AND FLESH
by
Peter Atkins

PAGE ONE

PANEL LAYOUT: Five bands each occupying the full width of the page and each of increasing depth, the first about an inch deep. The last band is divided into two panels of equal size. (ie. six panels in all)

PANEL ONE: Framed against a white background, there is a five-line musical stave divided up by bar lines and with colon-like Repeat Dots at each end. Scrawled in a manic hand in blood-red ink across the length of the stave is the title; SONGS OF METAL AND FLESH. A few spare drops of blood decorate the surrounding area.

PANEL TWO: CLOSE UP on a widely-staring human eye. Because the panel stretches the full width of the page and we are about to get succesively closer to this eye, some detail of the rest of the face will be in frame. It should be heavily shadowed so that our interest is exclusively on the eye. At the bottom of the panel is a CAPTION.

CAPTION
Beauty comes in at the eye. That's what they tell you.

PANEL THREE: TIGHTER CLOSE UP, as if we are TRACKING in on the eye. It all but fills the panel now. There is a CAPTION at the upper left of the panel and another to the lower right.

CAPTION 1
But that really undersells the world's generosity, don't you think? Dwell for a moment on the SMELL of a beautiful woman ...

CAPTION 2
Concentrate an the FEEL of the rose petal. Think on the TASTE of the beloved's tongue ...

PANEL FOUR: EVEN TIGHTER C.U. - so that we are just looking at curved bands of white, speckled colour, and jet black (white, iris, pupil). Within the shiny black of the pupil there is just the suggestion of a reflection - some kind of mass or hill, perhaps, but far too obliquely shown for us to guess.

CAPTION
And, most of all, LISTEN. Listen
to the world as it sings to you ...

PANEL FIVE: EXTREME CLOSE UP on the Pupil of the eye with just a hint of the coloured iris at each corner of the panel. The reflection, too, is now a little clearer, but still oblique; is it a mass of people? Is something horrible happening to them? A pile of corpses, perhaps?

CAPTION
Enjoy. Enjoy. I know I used to. For
me now it's different. For me now
it's true ...

PANEL SIX: Jet-black, not even a hint of the reflection - as if We were so close to the pupil that any closer would involve molecular study. Bottom right, a CAPTION.

CAPTION
Beauty comes in at the eye.

PAGE TWO

PANEL LAYOUT: A symmetrical nine-panel grid.

PANEL ONE: Jet-black panel like the last but with pinpoint of yellow light in its centre and thin beams of light radiating from it. At the top of the panel, a CAPTION.

CAPTION
Which is pretty ironic, given
my history ...

At the bottom of the panel, in a different typeface, is a sub-title like CAPTION.

CAPTION/TITLE
Thirty Years Ago.

PANEL TWO: In the foreground we see the profile of a young boy, JASON MARLOWE, and a thin beam of light being shone into his eye from a penlight in the hand of an OPTOMETRIST (only his hand is visible). In the background, on a chair by a wall decorated with framed diplomas, sits JASON's worried MOTHER, an attractive woman of about thirty.

PANEL THREE: JASON's head is still in foreground but is now facing the reader. He is about five years old and has a pleasant unremarkable face, except that his eyes are rolled slightly up in their sockets and have a milky, washed-out look. The OPTOMETRIST, a man in his early forties whose income just about disguises his natural seediness, has his hand on JASON's skull and stands behind him, looking out of frame to the unseen MOTHER.

OPTOMETRIST
I'm sorry, Mrs. Marlowe. There's no change. No change at all. Nor is there likely to be.

PANEL FOUR: Just the crown of JASON's skull is visible in the foreground as the OPTOMETRIST crosses the room towards the MOTHER, his head turned back in JASON's direction. The MOTHER has turned slightly in her chair and has one despairing hand raised to cover her face.

OPTOMETRIST
Your son ... Jason ... He's blind, Mrs. Marlowe. And he'll be blind for the rest of his life.

At the bottom of the panel, beside JASON's head, is a CAPTION.

CAPTION
Big news.

PANEL FIVE: CLOSER TWO-SHOT on the OPTOMETRIST and the MOTHER. She has turned to face him, her eyes a little wet. He stands over her, a little closer than he needs to be, a trust-me-I'm-a-doctor look on his face that flirts between competence, compassion, and condescension.

OPTOMETRIST
But, you know, his other senses WILL compensate. Have probably already begun to ...

There's a CAPTION at the bottom of the panel.

CAPTION
He didn't know the half of it. I was hardly even listening. I was busy sucking in the sensual details of the world.

PANEL SIX: CLOSE UP on the corner of the OPTOMETRIST's desk showing a decanter of water, two glasses, and a small pile of documents.

Two CAPTIONS, one towards the top, one towards the bottom.

CAPTION 1
Tiny rustles of paper and glass as breezes undetectable by most entered his room through gaps in his glazier's efficiency.

CAPTION 2
Subtle tingles on my tongue as traces

of his chemicals mated with my-taste-buds.

PANEL SEVEN; ANOTHER ANGLE on MRS. MARLOWE and the OPTOMETRIST. She has now crossed her legs. He has his hands casually in his pockets and a less-than-professional glint in his eye. He clearly finds this woman attractive.

CAPTION 1
I could hear the rustle of their underwear as they spoke.

CAPTION 2
I could smell the undercurrent of arousal in his response to my mother ...

PANEL EIGHT: CLOSER on MRS MARLOWE and OPTOMETRIST as they lean in slightly toward each other.

There's a CAPTION at the top of the panel.

CAPTION
... could hear the contractions in his throat as he tried to gulp it into hiding, could almost feel the heat from his flushing cheeks.

The expression on the OPTOMETRIST's face, though subtle and disguised, confirms JASON's reading. MRS MARLOWE's face, however, betrays only a sad concern for her son.

MRS MARLOWE
It's just .. it's just that it HURTS. When I think of all he'll miss. When I think of all he's MISSING ...

PANEL NINE: CLOSE UP on JASON's face, his sightless milky eyes rolled up but his expression calm and satisfied. Background is in half-tones, as if fading to invisibility or insignificance.

CAPTION 1
What was I missing? Redundant illustrations of things I already knew.

CAPTION 2
I had all I needed.

CAPTION 3
Smell. Sound. Touch. Taste ...

PAGE THREE

PANEL LAYOUT: Nine-panel grid.

PANEL ONE: JASON is sitting cross-legged surrounded only by white space. Musical notes swirl and dance in the air around him. His eyes are glassy but his face is ecstatic.

CAPTION 1
... and MUSIC!

CAPTION 2
I could hear music.

PANEL TWO: JASON against the white background again but now his boyish fingers snatch at the air attempting to grasp at the swirling notes as if he perceives them as objects, things to be caught, touched, tasted.

CAPTION 1
I could FEEL music. I could
almost SMELL it.

CAPTION 2
It displaces the air, you know.
It changes reality.

PANEL THREE: JASON in exactly the same position as PANEL TWO but now with the background filled in. He is cross-legged on the floor of his sitting room. The music he hears stems from a hi-fi in the room. MRS MARLOWE stands in an open doorway with a worried look on her face. (NB: remember this is about 1959 - room should be depicted accordingly. 'Hi-Fi' is probably a Dansette.)

CAPTION
It's solid. It takes up space.
I needed to TOUCH it ...

PANEL FOUR: The same sitting room but with a new addition to the furniture; an upright piano. JASON sits at it, his small hands stroking the keys.

CAPTION
... to MAKE it ... to FIND it ...

PANEL FIVE: TOP-SHOT, looking from overhead down onto a piano keyboard and two hands on it. Because of continuity, this is clearly JASON but the hands are older, the hands of a nineteen year old.

CAPTION 1
They called me a prodigy. They
called me inventive. I wasn't
inVENTing. I was unCOVering.

CAPTION 2
I was capturing for the deprived
world the hidden melodies it was
too deaf to hear for itself.

PANEL SIX: WIDE-SHOT of the nineteen year old JASON sitting at a Grand Piano in front of an audience of people his own age. The presence of a blackboard behind him and a lectern to his side suggests we are in an academic establishment.

CAPTION
And the more I found, the more
I knew was still hidden. The more
I sensed a vast sonic truth waiting
to be revealed.

PANEL SEVEN: SPLIT-SCREEN EFFECT - many hands applauding in one half of the panel as JASON's hands in CLOSE UP lift themselves off the keys as if he has just finished playing.

PANEL EIGHT: MEDIUM CLOSE UP of an older man's hand on JASON's shoulder, squeezing it in congratulation. It is the hand of the college PRINCIPAL. What we can see of JASON's face is completely impassive.

PRINCIPAL
And I trust none of us need any
more convincing of why Jason
Marlowe has been accepted into our
scholarship programme ...

PANEL NINE: JASON's head and shoulders against a white background with musical notes in half-tones around his head. A small private smile is on JASON's face.

CAPTION
I didn't listen to the flannel.
I didn't need it. He was right.
But the ghosts of the notes dying
around me were infinitely more
interesting.

<u>PAGE FOUR</u>

PANEL LAYOUT: Nine panel grid in format but the bottom strip is divided into FIVE small panels, not three normal ones, to imitate a CAMERA PAN.

PANEL ONE: Head and shoulders shot of DEBORAH, a beautiful teenage girl - but with dangerous eyes - who is cradling a violin and giving a half-smile as if she has just finished playing and knows she is being paid attention to.

CAPTION
The Academy was good for me. At
first. Not just music, but friends.
More than friends. There was Deborah.

PANEL TWO: LONG SHOT of the exterior of a Sorority House in moonlight. DEBORAH, in the open doorway, has her hand on JASON's arm and IS clearly persuading him to come in.

DEBORAH
It's safe. Be with me.

CAPTION
She sounded sweeter than running
water through reeds.

PANEL THREE: TIGHT CLOSE UP of bodies in love-making. A female hand pressed tight against a naked male back.

CAPTION
She smelt more beautiful than
meadows after spring rain.

PANEL FOUR: Another TIGHT C.U. A tongue licking at the hollow of a neck.

CAPTION
The taste of her shamed honey.

PANEL FIVE: Another TIGHT C.U. A male hand pressing aginst a female breast.

CAPTION
Touching her was like pressing
your hand to the beaches of heaven.

PANEL SIX: LOW ANGLE C.U. on JASON's face - as if from DEBORAH's POV as she lies beneath him. Except that we're in JASON's reality not hers - he is surrounded by the white space and notes again, which makes his ecstatic expression more ambiguous than straightforwardly orgasmic.

CAPTION
And the sounds of her pleasure were
the nearest song could come to those
hidden melodies, those mysterious
harmonies that I knew circled somewhere
between our world and the next.

PANELS SEVEN to ELEVEN: DEBORAH and JASON are lying in her bed after making love. JASON is asleep. DEBORAH is not - her eyes are fixed on a framed photo on her bedside table. Her face is fixed and impassive. We can't guess at her emotions.

The "movement" through this series of small panels is imitative of a camera simultaneously PANNING round and TRACKING in. We start behind the bedside table so that only the back of the photo is visible, with DEBORAH and JASON in the background. Then we move gradually round and in - concentrating on the revelation of the framed photo so that by the last panel the photo fills the

panel. It is a black and white head and shoulders portrait of STEPHEN MIDDLETON, an alarmingly good-looking fellow student.

PAGE FIVE

PANEL LAYOUT: Nine panel grid.

PANEL ONE: A colour duplicate of the b/w photo of STEPHEN from the last panel but instead of the photographer's blank backdrop we see the far wall of the Academy's concert room.

CAPTION
I learned other things at the
Academy, too ...

PANEL TWO: STEPHEN in similar pose but a WIDER SHOT including the front end of a piano at which he sits.

CAPTION
Rivalry ... Jealousy ...

PANEL THREE: EVEN WIDER SHOT of STEPHEN at the piano. Unlike JASON's mix of impassivity and ecstasy when he plays, STEPHEN's expression is one of intense concentration. His hair has fallen across his brow. Maybe he even sweats a little.

CAPTION
Stephen Middleton was the best the
Academy had. Apart from me.

PANEL FOUR: MEDIUM-LONG SHOT on the coffee room in the Academy. JASON, DEBORAH, and STEPHEN sit on easy chairs, smoking, drinking coffee, talking. DEBORAH sits midway between the two men, curled up on her chair. Her body is angled toward JASON but her face, complete with secret smile, is turned to STEPHEN.

In the background of the room is a coffee counter, a T.V., maybe a small bookcase, and a practice piano - an old upright.

CAPTION
His envious hatred swam in the
air around him each time we spoke,
despite his friendly words.

STEPHEN
You really are something special,
Jason. Something quite different
from the rest of us.

PANEL FIVE: CLOSER THREE-SHOT.

JASON
That's nonsense. You're good.

STEPHEN
It's true. I am. I'm bloody good. But you're ... different. You make it all seem ... natural. Easy.

JASON
It IS easy. That's the POINT. It's not ABOUT work, it's ... let me show you.

PANEL SIX: DIFFERENT ANGLE as JASON crosses the room to the practice piano. Although JASON is speaking, DEBORAH and STEPHEN are looking directly at each other rather than him.

JASON
You see, you think of it as something you have to make out of nothing. No. It's ALL THERE. Just let it all out and then catch what you want ...

PANEL SEVEN: OVERHEAD SHOT, CLOSE on the keyboard as JASON's hand is pulled across it (movement lines and depressed keys showing he's run across the whole keyboard).

JASON
Just let it all out. Just listen. Listen and snatch.

PANEL EIGHT: WIDE THREE-SHOT, JASON at piano in foreground, DEBORAH and STEPHEN now standing in background. They're standing very close and STEPHEN's arm is round her shoulder. They're looking at JASON.

STEPHEN
Fascinating ... I think I'm beginning to understand.

PANEL NINE: CLOSER THREE-SHOT. STEPHEN has pulled DEBORAH even closer to him. His free hand is arrogantly fondling her breast. DEBORAH's head is tipped back slightly in pleasure. JASON has a strange half-smile on his face as he continues to play.

CAPTION 1
They thought they had a little secret. But I knew. I could hear them. I could smell their cruel excitement.

CAPTION 2
But I played along.

<u>PAGE SIX</u>

PANEL LAYOUT: Nine panel grid.

PANEL ONE: DEBORAH's bedroom. OVERHEAD SHOT looking down at the bed, which contains a naked DEBORAH and JASON. They are embracing, lit only by moonlight.

CAPTION
So did she.

DEBORAH
I want to see. I want the light on.

PANEL TWO: JASON's room. CLOSE UP on STEPHEN's hand holding a flashlight and sending a yellow beam into the darkness that fills the rest of the panel.

PANEL THREE: DEBORAH's room. CLOSER TWO SHOT on DEBORAH and JASON. They are still in an embrace but DEBORAH is easing herself out of it, a smile of arousal on her face. (the light is now on)

DEBORAH
Wait. I want to play. Let's play something.

PANEL FOUR: JASON's room. WIDER SHOT of STEPHEN standing and his flashlight beam finding JASON's piano.

CAPTION
We played. While the real game went on elsewhere. While we were at her place, Stephen was at mine. She must have given him the key.

PANEL FIVE: DEBORAH's room. CLOSE UP on JASON's arm, wrist, and hand. He is tied to the bedpost by one of DEBORAH's silk stockings.

PANEL SIX: JASON's room. HIGH-ANGLE SHOT looking down at STEPHEN crouched in front of the piano. He's doing something at the keyboard but the lid is up so we don't know what it is.

PANEL SEVEN: DEBORAH's room. OVERHEAD SHOT down on the bed (same angle as panel one). Now JASON is on his back, his arms spreadeagled and tied to the bedposts by her stockings. DEBORAH crouches on top of him. One arm is tucked down in front of her. We can't see what it's doing but considering where she's sitting it's a fair bet she's masturbating either JASON or herself or both. The other hand, though, is in plain view. It's stretched out towards JASON's chest and it's wielding a knife. She has made several small scratches on his chest. (NB: this is perverted loveplay not mutilation - there's VERY little blood.) JASON's expression is one of tense excitement, not fear.

DEBORAH
It excites you, doesn't it? It makes you hard. You love it.

PANEL EIGHT: JASON's room. LONG SHOT with piano in foreground and STEPHEN exiting through the door in the background. The flashlight is off. It's the light through the open door that semi-illuminates the room and shows us the piano lid is down. We still don't know what he's done.

PANEL NINE: DEBORAH's room. MEDIUM-CLOSE on JASON, his arms stretched out. But he's surrounded by his white space and notes are dancing around him. The notes are two-tone now - there are red notes among the black. His face is ecstatic.

CAPTION
The song was better than ever.
She'd given me more clues to the
hidden sonatas. This mix of pain,
pleasure, and secret agendas was
the closest I'd got.

<u>PAGE SEVEN</u>

PANEL LAYOUT: 3 regular panels across the top of the page and then a big splash/montage panel taking up two-thirds of the page.

PANEL ONE: JASON's room. Same angle as panel eight, page six. It's now dawn. JASON is entering through the doorway.

CAPTION 1
It was dawn when I got home.

CAPTION 2
I should have known.

CAPTION 3
Should have smelt that guilty
cocktail of sweat and rust.

PANEL TWO: ANOTHER ANGLE as JASON crosses to the piano and lifts the lid.

CAPTION 1
Should have felt how the piano's
discomfort prefigured my pain.

CAPTION 2
But Deborah'd left me exhausted
and inspired.

PANEL THREE: HIGH ANGLE CLOSE SHOT on a section of the piano keyboard. Now we can see what STEPHEN did. In between every key is a slightly protruding razor blade.

CAPTION
A dangerous combination.

PANEL FOUR: A big, impressionistic mix of images. A montage of different but simultaneous aspects of one event.

What actually happens is that, as JASON runs his hand down the keyboard in his usual loosening-up glissando (as he demonstrated to STEPHEN in the coffee room), his fingers are sliced to ribbons by the razor blades.

So what we want is a series of striking and deeply unpleasant images: the hand starting to be pulled across and leaving a finger-tip or two behind; trails of blood along the white keys; a mutilated hand held high and spouting blood; very tight close-ups of the protruding razor blades; and - probably the main image and located in the lower right hand of the page - JASON's screaming, contorted face, surrounded by white space, broken notes in blood-red ink whirling spastically around it, mingling with his screams.

PAGE EIGHT

PANEL LAYOUT: Nine panel grid.

NB: panels one to three are identical in angle and location, but each panel is darker, as if night is falling. Let's assume panel one is four in the afternoon, panel two eight in the evening, and panel three midnight.

PANEL ONE: HIGH ANGLE MEDIUM-WIDE looking down on a hospital bed containing JASON. His heavily bandaged hand is on a support rail to the side of the bed and there are are a couple of drip-bags pumping away into his arm. His eyes are open, his face impassive.

CAPTION 1
Nothing was proved. I didn't want it to be. They'd given me a lot to think about. I was very grateful.

CAPTION 2
Deborah even visited. That was especially good.

PANEL TWO: Identical to panel one except that it's darker (twilight, not night) and DEBORAH is sitting beside the bed. JASON is rendered exactly the same as in panel one - ie. he has no apparent response to her visit. DEBORAH's face is a mask of prepared concern.

CAPTION 1
The counterpoint between her mouth's platitudes and her body's excitement was magnificent; like putting an A natural in a D sharp minor, like biting into a strawberry and finding an angry wasp.

At the bottom of the panel another caption bridges panels two and three.

CAPTION 2
I could smell it. I could taste it. My body bathed in the sweet satisfaction that my maiming brought her.

PANEL THREE: Identical to panel one except that night has fallen. JASON has still not changed expression or moved position.

(wider margin than normal between top row and second row, to signify a TIME CUT.)

PANEL FOUR: VERY WIDE SHOT. Prestigious concert hall, masses of people. STEPHEN on stage at grand piano. (Orchestra behind him if they can be fitted in.)

CAPTION 1
Our worlds diverged.

CAPTION 2
Stephen got the glamour. The tours. The recordings.

PANEL FIVE: TWO SHOT. STEPHEN and FAN at cocktail reception. The FAN, an achingly beautiful seventeen year old girl, stares up at STEPHEN with adoring eyes and proffered autograph book. STEPHEN, now looking about thirty years old, looks down at her with a fire in his eyes fuelled in equal part by lust and contempt.

CAPTION
He betrayed Deborah in every town he performed in. I liked that.

PANEL SIX: HIGH-ANGLE MEDIUM WIDE looking down on a hospital bed. The scene is reminiscent in staging of panels 1-3, but it's a different hospital and it's DEBORAH who's in the bed, with JASON sitting beside it. DEBORAH is ill, drawn and terrified. She looks, and is, very near death. JASON is angled away from us so that we can't tell what he's feeling.

CAPTION 1
Deborah got cancer and died.

CAPTION 2
I visited. She smelt fabulous. Fear and pain fought for dominance in harmonies of anguish.

PANEL SEVEN: LOW ANGLE MEDIUM WIDE. JASON sits behind a desk in an academic office. The room is PACKED with books and records. The desk before him has many open books - his hand is pressed onto one of them as if reading braille - and also sheets of music manuscript paper. His other hand, resting on the desk, is covered

by a black leather glove to disguise its disfigurement. JASON is now in his early thirties.

CAPTION
I got what I needed - and from which a concert career may have distracted me; space and time to research and compose. I had to pursue the insights I'd been given.

PANEL EIGHT: MEDIUM WIDE on outside of office door. It is clearly night - the college corridor is in darkness - but light escapes from beneath JASON's door, which is closed. The signs on the door read DEPT. OF ETHNO-MUSICOLOGY and PROFESSOR JASON MARLOWE.

CAPTION
I worked long hours but not lonely ones. I had my books in braille, my books on tape. I had centuries of hidden knowledge to keep me company.

PANEL NINE: OVERHEAD SHOT CLOSE on desk surface (as if JASON's POV). We are focussed on the cover of a book, on which JASON's black-gloved hand rests. The cover reads "AURELIA" by GERARD DE NERVAL. In the background, the spines of other books are visible and we can see some authors' names - such as DE ROBATAILLE and ROCCO PEVERELLI.

CAPTION 1
The Parisian lunatic, Gerard de Nerval - a poet who took lobsters for walks and hung himself with an apron - unlocked one door:

CAPTION 2 (different type-face)
"Let us recompose the dissonant scale and we will gain power in the world of the spirits"

PAGE NINE

PANEL LAYOUT: The whole page is a sheet of music manuscript paper viewed from a canted angle. It's professionally printed rather than a mss. of JASON's and looks entirely conventional except that the instructions printed over the staves (the things that normally read "andante" or "pizzicato") are unusual Italian phrases like "Poco Sangramente", "Como Uno Stilletto", and "Allegro e Lacrimante".

Laid over this background are three panels and four separate caption boxes. Panel one is top centre of the page with a caption box to either side. Panel two is middle right of the page and is wider than panel one with one caption box to the left. Panel three is bottom left of the page, wider again, with one caption

box to the riqht.

PANEL ONE: MEDIUM CLOSE on JASON at his desk. Manuscript paper lies in front of him. Despite his blindness, he is composing directly onto the paper - one of his hands holding a ruler or some kind of measuring device to guide the other hand which wields the pen.

CAPTION 1 (left of panel)
He was right. Music was a puzzle. A vast incomprehensible mystery which allowed initiates at best a glimpse of the manic world it hinted at. There were new scales to discover, new conjunctions of notes to reveal. Melodies of universal malice. Symphonies of suffering.

CAPTION 2 (right of panel)
Every time we found something consonant and sweet and thought we glimpsed the face of God, we'd been side-tracked and fooled into easy solutions. There was a bigger music. A darker song of terrible beauty. I would open the ears of the world to the screams of mountains in torment, to the death-cries of Dragons, to the eternal moans of the universe as its wounds split open to bleed space and ooze planets.

PANEL TWO; WIDER SHOT of JASON in a similar position to panel one but surrounded by his white space. As well as the black and bloody notes that circle his head, the white space also now contains to either side of him ethereal shapes in blue, like floating spirits.

CAPTION 3 (left of panel)
I knew the puzzle was solvable. I knew I would find the cluster of notes that would open the door to the occult. I had help. Spirit guides would come to me from the world of dreams. Blue angels singing the songs of metal and flesh, wordless and sublime.

PANEL THREE: EVEN WIDER SHOT of JASON but now we're back in the "real" world and can see the reality of his spirit guides: A CENOBITE stands to either side of his desk. They occupy exactly the same spatial relationship to JASON as the ethereal blue things in panel two in order to make it quite clear to the reader what is now guiding JASON.

Both CENOBITES, BRAINS and HOPPER, share the usual hellish aesthetic of decorative mutilation. BRAINS has had his scalp peeled open so that his brain pulses visibly, the gathered flesh of his scalp sewn into clusters around his temples and brow.

HOPPER has only one leg, but it is placed symmetrically right in the middle so that his waist flows neatly into it. BRAINS is from the PINHEAD school; tall, austere, and knowing. HOPPER is more like BUTTERBALL - a stupid ugly fuck.

There is no disruption to the room - BRAINS and HOPPER simply stand there, knowing that JASON is proceeding quite nicely down their ordained path without any pyrotechnics from them. Equally, JASON is in the same working position as the last two panels and seemingly quite unaware of the CENOBITES' physical presence.

CAPTION 4 (right of panel)
But always the real world would intrude, always the music of power would slip by me again. It was terrible. I knew the score was within me .. I just had to let it out.

PAGE TEN

PANEL LAYOUT: Five page-wide bands. Bands 1, 3, and 5 are narrower than bands 2 and 4 and are sub-divided into five very small panels each.

BAND ONE (PANELS 1 - 5): Five very small and very CLOSE images, all glimpses of one environment which we'll see fully in Band Two. Panel one; JASON's hand lights a candle. Panel two; a sheet of blank music paper lies on a bare wooden floor. Panel three; a hammer knocks a double-pointed nail into a piece of wood. Panel four; discarded trousers fall to the floor, with JASON's naked leg also in shot. Panel five; A section of a large piece of wood, bristling with nails, barbed hooks, and razor blades.

CAPTION (bridging panels 2 & 3)
Then one day I understood.

BAND TWO (PANEL 6): HIGH ANGLE WIDE on a room in JASON's house. The room is stripped of furniture and decoration. The floor is bare boards. JASON, naked, sits cross-legged in the centre of the room. Some candles - presumably for ambient smell, not light - burn here and there. Scattered in a rough semi-circle around JASON are many sheets of music manuscript paper, all blank. Behind him is a large piece of wood (probably an old door) propped upright. It is studded and scarred with razors, hooks, and nails.

CAPTION
I had to move beyond composition.
Beyond study. To an act of faith ...

BAND THREE (PANELS 7-11): Five very small panels like band one. This sequence of five images is like a perverse piece of Muybridge footage; we follow JASON sequentially as, now on his feet, he twists, turns, and drags himself across the board of

blades, his face alternately pain-wracked and serene, his body increasingly slashed and torn.

CAPTION (bridging panels 8, 9, & 10)
To unlock the puzzle, I had to
unlock myself.

BAND FOUR (PANEL TWELVE): Same angle as Band Two. JASON is on his feet, caught mid-step in a whirling dervish dance which sends sprays of his blood flying furiously through the room.

BAND FIVE (PANELS 13-17): Sequence of five small images; various sheets of mss. paper (one per frame) at different angles all being splashed by drops of JASON's blood. The drops, almost magically, land within stave lines rather than the white spaces between.

<u>PAGE ELEVEN</u>

PANEL LAYOUT: Six panel grid - except that the top row is divided into five small panels not two big ones. (nine panels in all)

Panels 1-5 are a PULL BACK, sequence from mss. paper

PANEL ONE: Entirely blood-red.

PANEL TWO: Big blood-red cicular splodge surrounded by white space with thin black line emerging from either side of splodge.

PANEL THREE: White space with three parallel black lines running across the panel. In the middle of the second line is the red splodge. Now we see it has a blue line joined to its right side which runs up the panel.

PANEL FOUR: Now it makes sense: We see a section of a five-line musical stave with two joined notes (quavers) on it. The tails of the notes and the connecting line are in blue ink, the heads of the notes are red blood.

PANEL FIVE: Now we see the whole piece of paper with JASON's hands on it, one hand feeling for the blood-drops, the other adding tails and shit.

Running right across the bottom of these panels, separating them from the four that follow, is a caption box.

CAPTION
A decade of research and composition
had swelled my reputation if not my
bank balance. I knew I could get it
performed. And I knew who I wanted to
perform it.

PANEL SIX: Crowd shot of a seated, well-dressed audience waiting

expectantly, facing reader.

CAPTION
The audience was full of the informed and the fashionable. People that I knew, in one way or another, would appreciate what they were being offered tonight.

PANEL SEVEN: CLOSER on crowd, picking out JASON in a prominent seat.

CAPTION
I was very excited. Tonight the world was to have its blinkers removed, its ear-plugs taken out. Tonight the veil between Life and the Real was to be shredded.

PANEL EIGHT: REVERSE ANGLE (crowd's POV). Stage with orchestra and, in front of them, a grand piano and a waving STEPHEN, acknowledging the crowd's welcoming applause.

CAPTION
The piece hadn't been rehearsed. I'd had them prepare with what I called related pieces. I'd fed the media some conceptualist bullshit reason for that. They lapped it up.

PANEL NINE: CLOSE on piano keyboard, with STEPHEN's hands perched in mid-air ready to begin playing.

CAPTION
Now it would begin.

<u>PAGE TWELVE</u>

PANEL LAYOUT: Nine panel grid. (NB; Every panel has a blue wash over it to place it in Cenobite reality)

PANEL ONE: Same angle as last on previous page. STEPHEN's hands have slammed down an the keys.

CAPTION
Crisp attack.

PANEL TWO: Head and shoulders shot of STEPHEN facing the reader. Two chains have flown in from the bottom corners of the panel - as if shooting up from the keyboard - and have buried themselves deep in each of his eyes. Blood jets away from his face. His mouth is open in a terrified scream of pain. We should see some background but we don't. Realism is hardly the issue here.

CAPTION
Good tone.

PANEL THREE: Same angle as panel one but WIDER shot as STEPHEN fall backwards, clawing at the chains. The keyboard, in foreground, still has several keys depressed - in other words, the music is continuing without his help.

CAPTION
My, he was playing well.

PANEL FOUR: WIDE on Auditorium. To left of panel is an aisle. Framed in the doorway at the end of it is BRAINS. To right of panel are the rows of seats. The audience are panicking, standing, screaming, trying to leave.

PANEL FIVE: WIDE on Auditorium. Like a reverse of the previous panel: to the right is an aisle with HOPPER in the doorway, to the left are rows of distraught audience. (ie; in effect, panels four and five are like the left and right hand sides of a Cinemascope frame with the middle bit - more audience - cut out.)

PANEL SIX: CLOSE on four or five chains flying through the air from various intersecting angles.

A caption bridges panels five and six.

CAPTION
The audience's enthusiasm could
only just be restrained.

PANEL SEVEN: MEDIUM-LONG on HOPPER. He's grinning. He's holding three severed heads. The heads are screaming.

PANEL EIGHT: MEDIUM-LONG on three headless violinists, their necks gouting blood, their fingers playing furiously.

PANEL NINE: MEDIUM-LONG on BRAINS. He is conducting with a bloodied baton.

A caption bridges panels eight and nine.

CAPTION
The band played like men possessed.

<u>PAGE THIRTEEN</u>

PANEL LAYOUT: One big splash panel takes up three-quarters of the page and then there's a bottom row of four small panels. (Five panels in all)

PANEL ONE (SPLASH): Big MASTER SHOT of the apocalypse in the concert hall. We're looking out from the stage. Hooks, chains, steaming piles of viscera, the works. The audience are dead or

insane. Mostly dead. Speared in their seats, hooked and slashed. In some cases, brains have exploded out through ears that have heard the forbidden. In others, whole bodies have spontaneously combusted. It's a hell of a mess. Except that, right in the middle of it, still sitting in his chair, still calm, still unharmed, is JASON.

CAPTION
Everything was perfect.

PANEL TWO: Head and shoulder shot of JASON, surrounded by his usual white aura (no notes in the air).

CAPTION
Everything was pure.

PANEL THREE: Exactly the same as panel two, except that now the aura is bright red.

CAPTION
Everything had passion.

PANEL FOUR: Exactly the same, except that the aura is cenobitic blue.

CAPTION
Everything was calm.

PANEL FIVE: A jet-black, panel.

CAPTION
Then everything went away.

PAGE FOURTEEN

PANEL LAYOUT: Four page-wide bands, the top one split into two panels. (Five panels in all).

The page layout is effectively a reverse of page one (minus the title panel); we are now pulling out from the eye instead of tracking into it.

PANEL ONE: Jet black panel.

CAPTION
Everything went to Hell.

PANEL TWO: VERY TIGHT CLOSE UP on the black pupil of JASON's eye with just some hints of white beyond the curvature of the pupil in the four corners. As on page one, there is an oblique reflection in the eye.

CAPTION 1
I'm alive, I think.

CAPTION 2
I can see.

PANEL THREE: TIGHT CLOSE UP on JASON's eye. Because we've now switched to the full width of the page, we see more detail. We've also TRACKED out a bit, but we're still very close.

CAPTION
I'm paralysed. I'm bereft of taste, touch, and smell.

PANEL FOUR: CLOSE UP on the eye, but now there is some facial detail around it. It's slightly to the left of the panel and the right side is heavily shadowed.

CAPTION 1
I'm deaf.

CAPTION 2
(A touch of exquisite cruelty, that)

PANEL FIVE: CLOSE UP on JASON's eyes. The one we've been TRACKING out from is to the left and sharply lit, the bridge of the nose and the other eye are to the right and all but lost in shadow.

CAPTION 1
I'm here for Eternity.

CAPTION 2
And all I can do is watch ...

PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL LAYOUT: Splash page.

PANEL: VERY WIDE, JASON's POV. In a cavernous space in Hell, we see what has become of the orchestra. It is a huge Boschian nightmare. Like the CENOBITES are fused and sewn to their costumes and weapons, so have the orchestra become one with their instruments. Limbs are replaced by sounding boards and strings. Cruelly exposed bones have had holes drilled in them to act as infernal flutes. Brainless crania become tom-toms. In some cases, these people play themselves. The more elaborately transformed are played by disembodied limbs or bows hooked up to perpetual motion machines. From the screams of agony on all the distressed faces, it is clear that their transformation hasn't robbed the bodies of sensitivity; each fingering, each stroking, each blowing or plucking is a new torture for them.

STEPHEN occupies centre stage, just as he did in the concert hall. His flesh has been peeled from his torso, allowing his rib-cage to be used as a xylophone. His sinews are stretched tight from his belly to his wrists, offering service as a harp. His

trachea and lungs have become a wind instrument.

JASON's last caption is placed to the top left of the page.

CAPTION
... as beauty comes in at the eye.

At the bottom right is another caption in a different type-face.

CAPTION
In a certain corridor in the 40011th sector of Leviathan's Labyrinth is a room devoted to the chastisement of many but the torture of one. Jason Marlowe should be flattered. He has the largest private room in Hell. Where 10,000 years is but the blink of a suppurating eye but a milli-second can contain the nausea of a lifetime, he sits and watches the orchestra of the damned. Everything he ever heard was a pale foreshadowing of the music of their pain. He can see them shake, quiver, and despair as they make the song of the spheres. All around him is the sound his spirit yearned for. All around him is the silence of an indifferent God. All Hail Leviathan, Lord of Irony! Long may his cancers bloom! Long may his mysteries fester!

THE END